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SUBJECT: UGANDA: ROUNDUP ON STAFFDEL SMITH AND KUIKEN VISIT

1. (SBU) Summary: Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Senate Armed Services Committee Professional staff members Shannon Smith and Michael Kuiken visited Uganda from July 4-7, 2007 to gain further understanding on both bilateral and military relations. The team examined the ongoing peace process in northern Uganda, health and development issues, the President's Emergency Plans for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), counterterrorism and special operations efforts, and the establishment of Africa Command (AFRICOM). The staff delegation visited USAID and PEPFAR programs in Kampala and Gulu. They met with the civil-military affairs team in Gulu and held consultations with several key NGO and UN partners as well as with Ugandan Government officials. End Summary.

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The Juba Peace Process  
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2. (SBU) On July 4, the staff delegation was briefed by Henry Okello Oryem, Minister of State for International Affairs and Deputy Lead Negotiator for the Government of Uganda (GOU), on recent developments in the Juba Peace Talks. He outlined the events leading to the signing of the third agenda item on the principles and mechanisms of accountability. Oryem noted the current recess in talks will be used to consult with religious leaders in the North and legal representatives in Kampala to flesh out an alternative justice mechanism acceptable to Ugandans and the international community. He recognized the key role the U.S. plays in northern Uganda and behind-the-scenes on the Juba talks. However, Oryem stressed that sending a special U.S. envoy to the talks would disrupt the peace process and invite unwanted propaganda and accusations from the Khartoum government. Oryem expressed the GOU's fear that increased U.S. involvement would prompt Khartoum to step up its assistance to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which could scuttle progress made to date.

3. (SBU) The staff delegation raised the peace process during meetings in Gulu with several Northern religious and political leaders. The Juba Peace Process, transitional justice, and prospects for internally displaced persons (IDP) returns dominated conversations. Kitara McMat, the Deputy District Chairman for Gulu highlighted improved regional security and increasing number of IDP returns but cautioned that some IDPs would not go home until the LRA leadership accepted peace. To promote peace, religious and political leaders advocated for alternative justice mechanisms, such as Mato Oput, in the final peace agreement. Although such mechanisms have never been used before for crimes of this magnitude, the community leaders argued that "Western" justice would be insufficient to compensate the hundreds of thousands of victims and to promote sustainable peace.

4. (SBU) Northern religious and political leaders were especially ardent in their arguments for a more visible U.S. presence in the North, including the appointment of a US special envoy to Juba. Resident District Commissioner Colonel Walter Ochora argued that while the talks have made significant progress, neither Government of Southern Sudan (GOSS) mediator Riek Machar nor UN envoy Joaquim Chissano had control over the LRA to prevent the talks from

collapsing as they have in past iterations. According to Ochora, a U.S. envoy to Juba would boost the confidence of the northern Uganda population and provide an authoritative voice to keep both parties committed to the talks.

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IDP Returns  
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15. (SBU) The staff delegation met with village representatives at Monroc IDP decongestion site outside of Gulu, home to approximately 4,672 displaced persons who resettled to Monroc from larger camps. The IDPs expressed frustration over the lack of government assurances of safety and services, fears of unexploded ordinances or land mines, and an inability to cultivate enough food in the camp due to insufficient seeds and tools. The camp leader speculated that within a year, most of the residents at Monroc would be able to cultivate enough food to start returning all the way home. Following the camp visit, the staff delegation witnessed a World Food Program (WFP) food distribution in Keyo for approximately 5,000 beneficiaries.

16. (SBU) In Kampala, the staff delegation had the opportunity to consult with several UN and NGO partners to discuss the challenges in transitioning from relief to development in the LRA-affected areas of northern Uganda. According to UN OCHA representative Tim Pitt, far fewer people have returned home than previously believed, spreading humanitarian agencies thinly across the original camps and close to 380 resettlement sites. The lack of government services in many of the resettlement sites is leading to higher malnutrition rates and necessitating both emergency relief and recovery in some areas. The partners bemoaned the lack of a clear government policy on returns and hoped that the Government's Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan, currently in draft form and expected to dedicate

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\$350 million to northern Uganda over the next three years, would bolster local government.

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PEPFAR  
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17. (SBU) The delegation visited two PEPFAR-supported comprehensive HIV/AIDS care and treatment facilities, Reach Out Mbuya in Kampala and The AIDS Support Organization (TASO) in Gulu, where they witnessed testimonies from clients and accompanied staff on a Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) home visit. Reach Out Mbuya cares for more than 2,500 HIV positive clients and families and provides ART to over 1,500 clients. The program is supported by a network of community volunteers, 70 percent of whom are also HIV-infected. The TASO center in Gulu is one of eleven branches throughout Uganda and supports more than 7,350 clients. In 2004, TASO was allocated initial PEPFAR funds to expand their care and counseling services to include the provision of ART using their innovative strategy of delivering home-based ART by motorcycle. With additional PEPFAR funds in 2005, TASO was able to expand their home-based counseling and testing for ART patients and families.

18. (SBU) On July 7, Representatives from the NGO community, Center for Disease Control (CDC), PEPFAR, and USAID met with staff member Smith to discuss health and HIV/AIDS issues for the upcoming PEPFAR reauthorization bill. The group primarily discussed earmarks as a limitation to prevention programs. Although some earmarks help guide programming, for example the earmark for orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), most inhibit the response to local epidemics. The prevention earmarks focus on behavioral interventions and make it difficult to include biomedical ones, such as male circumcision and family planning for HIV positive people, particularly HIV positive mothers in Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programs; and do not provide the flexibility to incorporate other evidence based biomedical interventions as they become available. The discussion also highlighted other difficulties in the health sector including recruitment and retention of staff in rural and hard to reach areas despite many unemployed recent nursing and medical graduates, the need for

nutritional supplementation, and challenges with supply chain management of essential HIV/AIDS commodities.

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Military Relations  
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¶9. (SBU) The staff delegation visited a Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) training facility in Kasenyi in order to observe first-hand military to military relations and counterterrorism training. The delegation witnessed a training exercise in which Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) soldiers trained how to properly search a building occupied by terrorists.

¶10. (SBU) On July 7, Chief of Defense Forces Aronda Nyakairima, Commander for Land Forces Lieutenant General Katumba Wamala, and Chief of Military Intelligence Leopold Kyanda briefed the delegation on military issues. Aronda remains uncertain whether the situation in Mogadishu has improved since the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) began. He argued against any "hybrid" AU-UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia, explaining such a mission will only encourage the Union of Islamic Courts to keep the security situation chaotic, judging the UN as unlikely to get involved under such circumstances. He stressed that Uganda and the UPDF stand ready to actively work with the U.S. as partners against terrorism. Wamala indicated the UPDF does not intend to rotate its next contingent into Mogadishu until November or December 2007, instead of this August or September, ostensibly because highly motivated UPDF troops "want" to remain. Wamala also signaled that the force is to replace, not augment, the current battle group. However, he indicated that a successful conclusion of peace talks with the LRA would free up UPDF commitments in northern Uganda and allow an expansion of Uganda's AMISOM contingent, which Wamala signaled the UPDF was amenable to doing. Finally, he identified improvised explosive devices (IEDs) as the UPDF's biggest challenge in Mogadishu for the foreseeable future and, therefore, regards force protection as a top priority.

¶11. (SBU) The Ugandan military officials stated the U.S. brokered Tripartite plus process continues to help build confidence between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, and Rwanda. Kyanda said the People's Redemption Army (PRA) remains an outstanding issue between Rwanda and Uganda. Rwanda is demanding that Uganda produce a PRA organizational chart before it will take action against alleged PRA in Rwanda. Wamala stated that DRC has been more willing to discuss the LRA presence in Garamba, but has yet to take concrete action.

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Comment  
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¶12. (SBU) The staff delegation covered a wide range of issues while in Uganda. Smith was particularly interested in gaining post's perspective on PEPFAR before the re-authorization bill is considered. Both staff members gained a deeper appreciation for conditions in northern Uganda, particularly that there have been very few LRA activities in Uganda in over a year and that many of the IDPs have already returned home and many more are on their way home. At the conclusion of the trip neither raised the issue of a special U.S. envoy for the LRA talks, perhaps mindful of Okello Oryem's concerns that Khartoum would react negatively to increased U.S. involvement and possibly jeopardize the talks. The staff members were also impressed by the level of interaction and involvement by the embassy officers in Kampala and Juba with the parties and mediation team at the talks. It is clear to post that the briefings provided by advocacy NGOs to the Hill are not giving sufficient weight to positive developments in the north at the Juba talks. We look forward to CODELS Lowey and Feingold next month and hope to be able to provide them a more accurate picture of northern Uganda and the positive role the U.S. is playing at Juba.